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Representative Steve Kirby

29th District

March 2003

Last year we cut expenses by \$685 million. We avoided more cuts by using one-time money that wasn't actual revenue to balance the budget...and it's caught up with us now. My hope at the time was that the economy would improve...it didn't.

To make a long story short, the unsustainable revenue from last year, increases in caseloads, schooling, and health care costs this year, combined with voter initiatives lacking funding sources, put us a couple BILLION dollars in the red. Cutting the budget that much will definitely impact our lives and our neighborhoods:

- Those 60,000 people getting kicked off the Basic Health Plan are not going to magically become healthy. They're going straight to our local emergency rooms for their health care. If you get sick or injured at night or on the weekend, the time you currently spend in the ER waiting room will be hours longer.
- Proposed cuts in the prisons will result in the immediate release of 1,200 inmates and the elimination of court-ordered supervision of thousands of other convicted offenders. Add those criminals to the ones who just haven't been caught yet, and our neighborhoods become substantially more dangerous.
- Oh, and remember the sex predators on McNeil Island? Remember that high level of security we were promised to insure our safety whenever they leave the island? That didn't last long. It's now proposed to be cut.
- Other proposed cuts will result in more homeless mentally ill people wandering our neighborhoods. Nursing homes may have to close. Classrooms will be overcrowded. And I wouldn't be too anxious to give away that "temporary" county jail building. State budget cuts will cause our new jail to be filled beyond capacity very soon and the early release of criminals will continue.

I think you get my point. The proposed cuts are drastic and they WILL affect most of us in one way or another. If we try to "enhance revenue" (that's code for raising taxes) it is likely an initiative will overturn them and we'll be back to square one.

There are no simple solutions left to consider. Those radio jocks and political opportunists who claim we can avoid reductions in service by "cutting the fat" are wrong and they know it. I looked in the budget for the Department of Government Waste and it's just not there. (Apparently it's already been eliminated.) I don't mean to suggest that there are no inappropriate expenditures anywhere in state government, but believe me, they won't amount to enough to solve our budget crisis. And by the way, I looked into it and the Governor doesn't really have a private jet. It was a great story except for the fact that it was bogus.

Having said all this, I believe we will eventually get agreement on a budget that nobody likes but that the majority of us will have to vote for. **Doing nothing is not an option.** I'll do my best to minimize the collateral damage these budget cuts will cause, and watch for "revenue enhancers" that will help more than they hurt. Stay tuned...

Representative Steve Kirby
29th District

***“Partisan posturing won’t cut it...
It’s time to bite the bullet on the budget...”***



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Steve Kirby**
29th District

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